



The end of 2021 is approaching fast, and it is time to reflect on the year that has passed. Many of our projects have continued to move forward despite the ongoing pandemic and the significant challenges it creates. The online cooperation has made huge progress the last 18 months, and a large range of activities are carried out online. In this issue of the Newsletter, we share some useful tips for online workshops and introduce our new colleague who is based in COMESA (and have only met us online so far).

In September, we carried out the first physical mission since the start of the

pandemic, and more are in the pipeline. The online cooperation cannot fully replace benefits of working together face to face, and travel will still be an important element of our cooperation. At the same time, reducing the carbon footprint is necessary, so when travelling resumes, the new normal is likely to be a mixed mode of online and face-to-face cooperation. Combining travel with remote activities will ensure better communication and follow-up between each mission while reducing the need for travel, contributing to more sustainable and efficient cooperation in the long run.



Janne Utkilen
Head of Division for
International
Development Cooperation

How can we improve food security statistics?

To support partners in their efforts to improve statistics on food security Mr Owen Siyoto from the Zambia Statistics Agency has joined the Food Security Statistics project.

First, Owen, what is your role in the project and how does your background in statistics come to use?

My main task will be to build capacity in six National statistical offices in the COMESA countries. I know the countries well and I believe that is a good thing for the capacity building.

Also, I have worked with Household Consumption and Expenditure Surveys for poverty analysis. Hence, I know these data well. And I am really looking forward to expanding my knowledge about this important field. For a guy like me who likes to get my hands dirty in data cleaning I couldn't have had a better position.

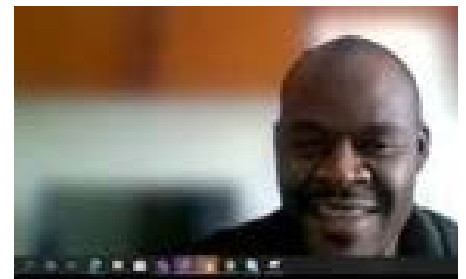
How is the cooperation with SSB going?

It has been great so far. The most exciting part of it all is that our cooperation gives me the opportunity to expand my knowledge.

This is the case both with respect to how we use the data from the Household Consumption and Expenditure Surveys in food security analysis and learning how to facilitate these surveys for food security analysis.

What is the main difference for you in this project compared to your job in Zambia Statistics Agency?

A new thing is the great opportunity to work with data from different countries. And it is inspiring to contribute to developing better policies in the whole region.



Screen shot of Mr. Owen Siyoto during TEAMS interview.

Facts about the Food Security Statistics project

The project's main purpose is to improve the information base for national and regional food security by making better use of Household Consumption and Expenditure Surveys.

Capacity sharing is also a central part of the project, and a total of six countries will participate. So far, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi are on board. Other central partners are the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the UN's Committee of Experts on food security, agricultural and rural statistics (UN CEAG).

The opportunity to work more internationally is something I appreciate too. Meeting people from different parts of the world and learning about different cultures and even foods through the work you are doing is certainly a nice side-effect, lol!

How do you plan to build food security statistics capacity?

First, we prepared and held bilateral meetings with the six partner countries in September 2021. The agenda of the meetings were to explain the rationale of the project and prioritize the work. After the meetings training we will start using the countries' own data.

Zimbabwe and Zambia responded positively even before the bilateral meetings, and we have already been working with colleagues from Malawi. Therefore, these countries will be the first ones to build food security statistics in the project.

Side by side with the training we are also writing guidelines for how to prepare data for food security statistics. Our goal is that these guidelines will be approved by UN in 2024. I think this will be a good starting point; combining practical training with guidelines for future work.



What are the challenges met in this project so far?

Off course, one challenge is that most COMESA-countries do not have any experience with analysing food security based on Household Consumption and Expenditure Surveys. Poverty analysis focus on cleaning the expenditure data, but while food security analysis will need to concentrate on cleaning the quantities of the food object data. It will be a lot of work to build the statistical capacity referring to such a huge dataset, with more than 1700 lines of codes in the syntax used. But I guess they just must learn it.

Another challenge that we anticipate is that some countries such as Zambia may not have conversion factors for non-standard units. For those of us who are not experts on statistics, a non-standard unit can be a bucket, a bag or other typical measures used in local market places. Further, a conversion factor is transforming these non-standards units into standard units as kilos and litres. The lack of conversion factors might be a challenge for our food security analysis. And we need to figure out how to go around this issue.

In doing so, we might have to do imputations. But a more sustainable solution has been to encourage the Zambia Statistics Agency to collect the weights for non-standard units in this year's data collection for the Household Consumption and Expenditure Survey. Statistics Norway has facilitated for purchasing the scales which Zambia Statistics Agency will use for this purpose (see picture below).

Last, but not least, the pandemic situation has also been somewhat challenging. Our initial plan was to meet up with my colleagues in Statistics Norway and learn shoulder by shoulder, but we had to do this digitally instead.

COMESA staff are handing over the scales funded by the Food Security project, to colleagues in the Zambia Statistical Agency. From left to right: Wilson Chizebuka and Owen Siyoto from COMESA together with Mody Simusoke and Lovemore Zonde from Zambia Statistical Agency.

“Statistics in Smartphone” – an offspring of institutional cooperation

The “Statistics in Smartphone” application was released in Play Market in December 2020, following an idea of statisticians in the State Statistics Service of Ukraine. A lesson is that innovation might emerge on its own feet, following other cooperation projects.

But first, which gains do users have by the innovative “Statistics in Smartphone” app? The developers’ goal is to provide easy access to the official statistics. This is obtained by making the content easily available in the new app for all type of users, including journalists, analysts or the public.

In the new smartphone app users can find statistics by topic, such as ‘Population’, ‘GDP’, ‘Prices’ or ‘Industry’ etc. Further, data can be visualized over time, and stored and downloaded. The users can also give the Statistics Service feedback via the app, if they want to. The app is free of charge, and statistical information is available in both Ukrainian and in English.

The app idea came about based on the development of a new website for the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, in a cooperation project with Statistics Norway and financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The work on creating the design and the content of the new website started in November 2017. Based on this, the State Statistics Service of Ukraine was inspired to

take things further and develop “Statistics in Smartphone” as a new mode for disseminating statistics. “Statistics in Smartphone” was developed solely by the State Statistics Service of Ukraine.

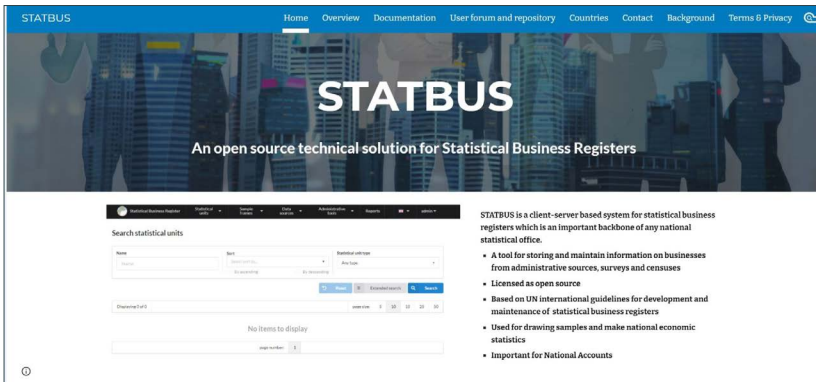
Now, the employees of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine are investigating further improvements and developments for the app. These include the extension of data sets related to the Sustainable Development Goals and Gender Statistics. The ongoing development also include introducing new types of data visualization, and adjustments for iOS-compatibility.

Yet another important point to mention is that the State Statistics Service of Ukraine’s app-initiative is a good indicator for the sustainability of the cooperation program. Statistical capacity building is not only about providing technical advice. It is also about inspiring new initiatives and changes in our ways of working. This time the outcome was a novel app for disseminating statistics, made possible by the statisticians’ use of new knowledge.

*Allan Henrysson,
Long Term Adviser in Kyiv.*



New milestones in development of STATBUS, the generic business register system



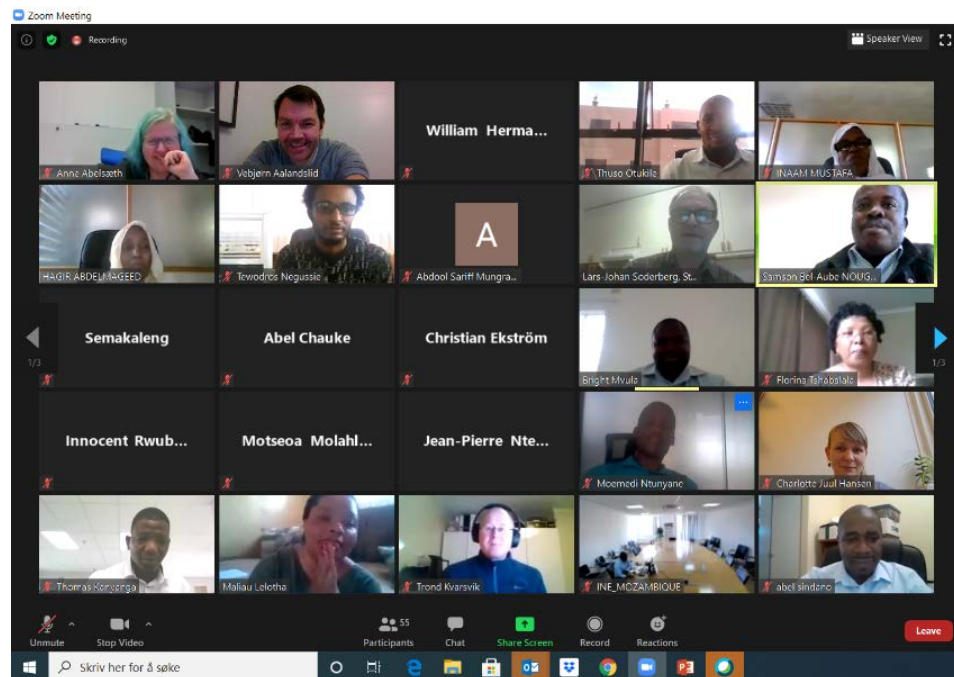
From the STATBUS website www.statbus.org

Over the last years Statistics Norway (SSB) has worked with partners to develop a generic statistical business register system. We have for many years given technical assistance to sister organizations that want to improve their economic statistics. A common challenge for many of our partner countries has been to develop and maintain a technical platform for hosting a statistical version of their respective business registers.

We have observed that there are few “off the shelf” products in this area and many offices end up with inadequate solutions. The typical case is often non-updated Excel spread sheets with various versions of these existing in subject matter divisions. Based on this, SSB, together with partners, have a generic web-based application for statistical business registers. The system is called STATBUS and is based on the UN international guidelines for development and maintenance of statistical business registers.

A first version of STATBUS has been introduced in Kyrgyzstan and Kenya and we are now working with additional countries to improve the system. This work is done in collaboration with Statistics Sweden and African Union’s statistical division, STATAFRIC.

This summer a website www.statbus.org was launched where interested parties can find more information about the generic solutions. STATBUS has also been nominated as a Digital Public Good under the Digital Public Goods Alliance and we are currently working to adapt the system to fully comply as an open source solution.



Presentation of STATBUS in a virtual meeting organized by Statafric, African Union.

Oceans for Development – Exploring a new form of peer to peer learning with Indonesia

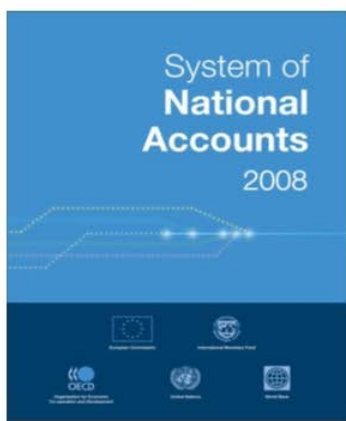
The Ocean for Development programme was launched by the previous Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg in October 2019 to reinforce Norway's development cooperation on ocean management. It is one of Norway's contributions to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14, Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, and the broader United Nations 2030 Agenda. The overarching objective is to promote a strengthened, sustainable, and inclusive ocean economy in the cooperating countries. The Programme is demand driven and an important element is to establish institutional cooperation between Norwegian institutions and counterpart institutions in cooperating countries.

At the time of writing, Statistics Norway (SSB) has started the planning of a statistics sub-component with Indonesia. Potential

areas of collaboration between SSB and Indonesian partners will be further developed as the planning continues.

A key element in the cooperation will be ocean accounting that reflects the true value of the ocean. These ocean accounts will in turn support evidence-based decision making and sustainable development of the ocean economy.

Both Indonesia and Norway are members of the *High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy (HLP)*¹, making them very committed to improve the management of the ocean. With the HLP recommendations and the emphasis on developing ocean accounting both countries are prioritizing this work. As this work is still at an early stage in both countries, the potential for synergies is high. SSB will engage experts from National accounts and the research department in this cooperation project.



SEEA Ecosystem Accounting



SEEA Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EA)
Final draft (as adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2021): [English](#)

3 accounting frameworks of relevance in ocean accounting.

¹HLP is a unique initiative of 14 serving heads of government committed to catalyzing bold, pragmatic solutions for ocean health and wealth that support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and build a better future for people and the planet (Hoegh-Guldberg, O., et al 2019).

Three NADABAS webinars in 2021



The National Accounts Database System NADABAS, is a free software for the compilation of national accounts. It is an Excel-base tool which allows countries to design and organise a national accounts compilation system according to their own needs.

The first version of NADABAS was developed in Mozambique in 2004 in a Nordic project operated jointly by the national statistical agencies in Sweden, Denmark and Norway and providing support to the National Statistical Institute in Mozambique. The system was further improved in Lesotho 2007 (EU-project). A major revision was sponsored by Pacific & Virgin Islands Training Initiatives Graduate School USA as the system was introduced in Palau and the Marshall Islands. Since then, the system has been introduced in several countries, including Kenya 2010 (World Bank and Statistics Sweden), Eswatini (2015), Namibia (2016) and Botswana (2016) with support of the African Development Bank.

Learn more about NADABAS on its website: <http://www.nadabas.net>

There has been a growing interest to learn about the tool, and in January 2019, a work-

shop was organised in Pretoria to agree on the future governance structure and ensure the sustainability of NADABAS. One of the outcomes was to establish a network of NADABAS user, with support of Statistics Sweden, Statistics Norway and STATAFRIC, who will become the custodian of NADABAS.

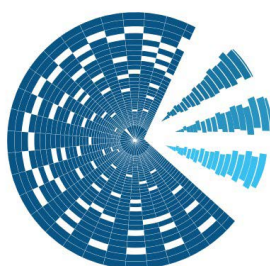
This year, three NADABAS webinars have already been organised by STATAFRIC, Statistics Sweden and Statistics Norway. In addition, the national accounts teams from Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique and Namibia gave presentations and shared their experience with using NADABAS. These country presentations have been particularly interesting, allowing NSOs to understand how NADABAS works in practice. A training of trainers-workshop in Tunis is planned when travel resumes.

For the webinar on 16-17 September 2021, the National Statistical Offices of all AU Members were invited, and more than 120 persons attended the webinar. The webinar was livestreamed on YouTube and can be found at [STATAFRIC AU - YouTube](#).

New statistical cooperation between Ethiopia and Norway

A new institutional cooperation between Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA) and SSB started 1 September this year. The project is the result of a long and collaborative planning phase and the project is already well on its way. The project will last until the end of 2024 and is financed by Norad. CSA and SSB are also working together in the Gender Equality for Development project.

The project aims to improve the institutional development of CSA and the national statistical system (NSS), and to improve communication and availability of statistics. The project includes NSS and donor coordination, quality assessments and establishing a training centre, and it aims to make the dissemination more user-friendly. SSB will also support CSA in the process of gaining access to more administrative data to improve quality, make the statistical production more efficient and cost effective and reduce response burden.



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The project will focus on three statistical domains, namely vital statistics, environmental statistics and statistics business register. CSA and SSB started with activities during the planning process and have already established a very good cooperation.

Cash flows from Norway to developing countries – A pilot study of available data

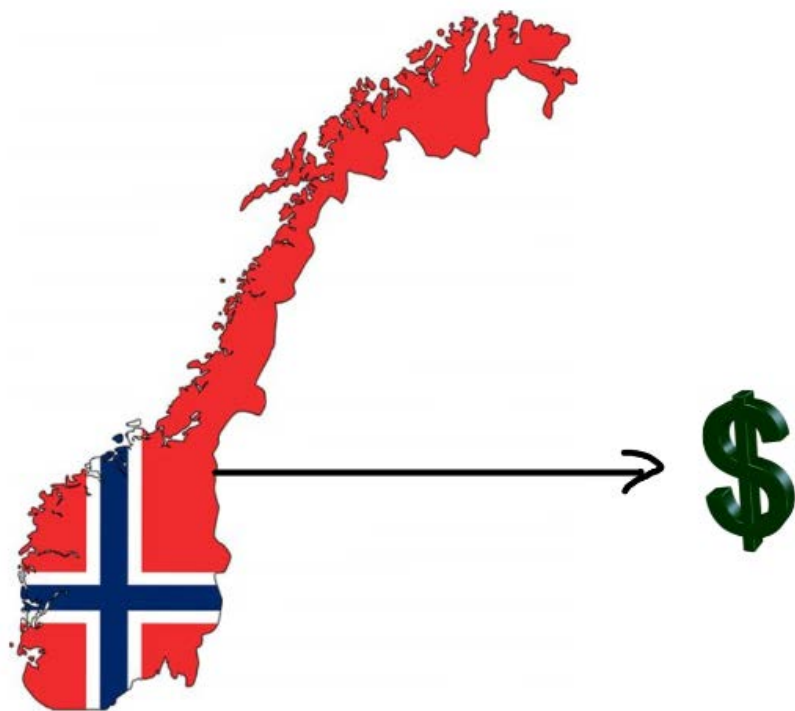
In April, Norad contacted Statistics Norway with a request to investigate available data and statistics that could be used to analyse cash flows going from Norway to developing countries. Cash flows connected to i.e. investments, trade and remittances may in addition to aid be important for development in developing countries, and Norad is interested in doing a comparable analysis of how these different types of flows have developed over time in different countries. To be able to do this, they need to know more about the availability of data.

It was agreed that SSB, together with the consulting team Vista Analyse, would do a preliminary study of data availability in Statistics Norway. The findings of the study should give Norad a better decision basis for choosing what types of cash flows they can analyse in more detail.

This relatively short preliminary study started up in the beginning of July and is now close to finalised. Several of Statistics Norway's subject matter divisions have contributed to the work. The divisions for Foreign Trade and Financial Accounts both have relevant statistics and data that they have described and assessed in relation to the purpose of this work. The group for external accounts (UR) in the division for National Accounts has played a key role since UR constitutes the framework we propose for analysing cash flows between Norway and abroad.

The preliminary study has shown that there are many challenges associated with obtaining good and comparable data for cross-border cash flows. When we are particularly interested in seeing what ends up in developing countries, it becomes even more difficult. This gives challenges both in terms of confidentiality and in relation to transfers going via "intermediate countries".

The study concludes that Statistics Norway has relatively good figures that can be distributed at country level for cash flows related to trade in goods and services and inventory figures for direct investments and portfolio investments. For private money transfers (remittances) going to developing countries, there are major quality challenges in the figures available today. It will require further analysis, method development and coding work before we can offer better data describing remittances going from Norway to abroad. Remittances are of key interest in analysing the role of cash flows for development in developing countries. This preliminary study describes possible further studies for the development of better data in this area in the future.



Zooming in on online interaction



Karianne Lund

Need some tips to activate your online workshop participants? Karianne Lund is an SSB expert on questionnaire development and testing. She has trained people internally in SSB, worked with partner NSOs in Africa and Asia and helped several international organisations developing their questionnaires. The COVID pandemic has forced us all to think differently about training. Last year, Karianne and colleagues moved to online assistance in expert appraisals and cognitive interviewing, and earlier this year she led a nine days workshop in questionnaire development and training for colleagues in State Statistics Service of Ukraine (SSSU).

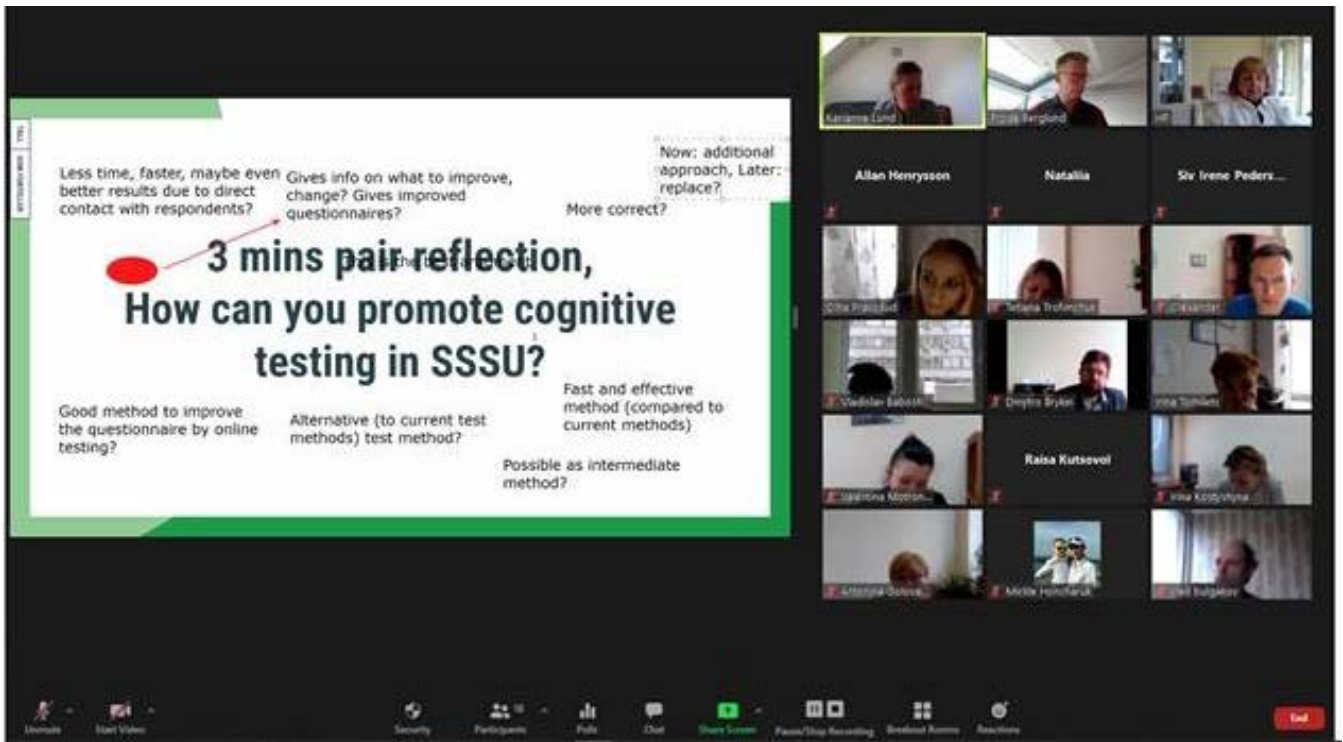
What was the course about?

The course was held in a series of three sets of three half day sessions spread over a period of three weeks. Our colleagues in SSSU had previously signalled a specific interest for cognitive testing. Hence, the course covered a general introduction to current best methods (CBM) within the field of questionnaire methodology with a particular focus

on cognitive testing. Considering the length of the workshop, as well as the conduction entirely dependent on remote facilitation through Zoom, we were focused on how we could raise and maintain our colleagues' interest and engagement through the entire course. We wanted to reduce the effect of "Zoom fatigue" even for a topic as engaging as questionnaire design. As it turned out, the crowd was very enthusiastic and active, so our concerns were luckily not that relevant.

What do you think are the main differences between physical workshops and online ones?

My perspective is that Zoom or any other web-based tool for remote learning, may never fully replace face-to-face interaction. You just can't beat face-to-face communication. However, by implementing a course that's frequently spiced up with interactive engagement tasks, it's possible to trigger people's attention to keep them fully engaged throughout a full course day. Of course, to some extent we lose control over



Karianne's 10 tips for interaction in Zoom

- 1. Using raised hands to signal who has heard of a concept**
- 2. Zoom poll for feedback**
- 3. Breakout-rooms for reflection in groups or pairs**
- 4. 2 minutes individual reflection**
- 5. Homework with feedback in the meeting**
- 6. Direct questions to individuals**
- 7. Short presentations by the participants**
- 8. Using the chat function to answer questions**
- 9. Using Zoom reactions: Thumbs up or down as response to questions**
- 10. Using Zoom annotate, where all the participants can write directly on the presentation**

the participants focus in a remote learning setting, due to them being at home and they are fully in control of our access to their personal learning space. I think it's even more important to prepare well for remote courses, to avoid unnecessary technical or other obstacles, as the room for improvisation is smaller compared to meeting face-to-face.

Statistics Norway has an internal forum for sharing experiences with online learning. You shared a list of interaction techniques to the forum. What are those and why do you think they are important?

We saw it as a fun challenge to make the most out of the one tool we were assigned to use – Zoom. We wanted to avoid having technical troubles from using several web-based tools at the same time. By checking with colleagues for their advice and experience, extensive googling and conducting test meetings in the tool, we explored quite a

few opportunities to engage course participants. A pleasant side-effect of this, was that both the participants in SSSU and us in SSB learned more about opportunities in the Zoom tool. We found that frequent use of breakout rooms in random pairs and in fixed groups worked well, as well as the Zoom survey tool.

The newer (to us) ways to engage, such as interactive "annotate" to for example draw a line between related concepts or circle a correct response, took some time for participants to get familiar with. For this to be a success from day one we would have to practice, to make sure everyone knew how to do it. Our favorites were however "true or false statements" indicated by thumbs up or down, as well as using the chat function to suggest the number of correct responses to a question posted on the screen. Since the full course depended on interpreters, we used numbers to indicate a response rather than text.

We already have more ideas for next time.

Improving metadata system in Kyrgyzstan

In September, for the first time since the start of the pandemic, it was possible to organize a short-term mission to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyzstan Republic (NSC). The main purpose of the mission was to co-host a seminar to kick-start work on the NSC electronic metadata system.

According to the UN recommendations in the field of official statistics, official statistical production system should be based on a single metadata system to ensure the use of common concepts, classifications and methods that will ensure consistency and efficiency of the statistical production process.

Transition to electronic data collection system is one of the strategic goals of modernization of the NSC. This will help reduce response burden and the cost for production of statistics, improve the quality of input and output statistics and streamline the organizational structure of the entire statistical system. Development and implementation of electronic data collection system is also one of the priority activities of “the road map” to implement the 2019-2023 Digital Kyrgyzstan Concept. An underlying, modernized metadata system connecting the different part of the statistics production is a core prerequisite to achieve this, hence to

facilitate for these changes a revision of the NSC metadata system has been in demand.

To follow up on this, at the Annual meeting between SSB and NSC in March 2020 it was decided that NSC will create a metadata system to tie concepts, classifications and statistical data at NSC together. A specification for the system was written by NSC and SSB in cooperation, and a mini-tender held to find a contractor. The tender was launched in April 2021 and an agreement with the selected contractor, Intersoft, was reached in June 2021.

To formally start this work, a kick off seminar was held in Issyk-Kul. Here project team members from NSC met with experts from the Intersoft company and SSB. This was essential to agree upon a common understanding of what to develop and during the course of the seminar a consensus was reached. It has been a long time since NSC last time revised its metadata system and as all the project team members are new, SSB plans one more activity in the spring of 2022 to review and advice on the metadata content itself. Also, the consultant together with an SSB metadata expert will follow the project online by installing and testing the system as it is created.



The NSC project team members, together with experts from the Intersoft company and SSB.

Continued support to Ukraine



Statistics Norway are happy to continue cooperation with the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, following funding for a second phase in the project, which started in November 2017. This extension enables us to finish some of the work started, and to achieve new goals.

State Statistics Service of Ukraine and Statistic Norway have enjoyed a good and fruitful cooperation since November 2017. The project has now been prolonged into a phase two, due to a cost-extension. This extension provides a new full three-year phase, ending in December 2023.

The extension allows for a flexible and smooth transition between the first and second phase. This is a great advantage due to the complications and delays caused by COVID-19. The planning of the second phase started already the autumn 2019 and continued throughout 2020. The goals for the new phase have been based on needs of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine.

Some of the goals of phase two are partly a continuation of goals from phase one. The main goals of phase two, and hence for the years 2021-2023, are:

- still improved institutional development,
- increased access to and understanding of official statistics,
- more and improved official statistics,
- ensure sustainability of the internal training programme established in the first phase,
- improving internal communication,
- reducing response burden,
- establishing a well-functioning organisation for providing microdata to researchers.

Improved statistical literacy and a focus on gender statistics will increase access and understanding of official statistics, as will a continued focus on developing a metadata system.

Developing the statistical business register will continue in the second phase. This is also the case for the focus on internally displaced persons.

The first phase output on price statistics was about improvements for the Consumer Price Indexes, both for the methodology of the indicator itself, and by introducing electronic data collection such as Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing and web scraping.

In phase two of our project, the output from price statistics will be extended to include a Producer Price Index for services and a House Price Index. Phase two will also include recommendations on the Labour Force Survey, statistics on income and living conditions, and demographic statistics.

We have cooperated digitally in the project since the start of the pandemic. This has been successful due to the motivation of the experts in both institutions.

Register-based censuses

There is a growing interest all over the world to move from traditional censuses to register-based or combined censuses, to save costs and to improve timeliness and quality. The need to minimize face-to-face interviews due to the pandemic has also contributed to this interest. So far only a few European countries have conducted fully register-based censuses, but many countries have combined the use of register data with data collected in the field or are planning to do so in the coming years.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has established a group for developing an e-learning course on register-based censuses, where the Division for international development cooperation of Statistics Norway is represented. The group consists of UNFPA staff and experts with experience from censuses in many countries. The group has had weekly web meetings since November

last year. Many issues have been debated and a substantial amount of text has been written. The group expects to finish its work at the end of 2021, when communication specialists will transform the chapters to e-learning. The chapters that have been written will be published in a technical paper.

The topics include

- Advantages and disadvantages of the register-based census approach
- Prerequisites for conducting a register-based census
- Content and role of different registers
- Effective use of administrative data
- Assessing the quality of a census
- Case studies from Bahrain, Estonia, Indonesia, Iran, New Zealand, Norway, Oman and Republic of Korea



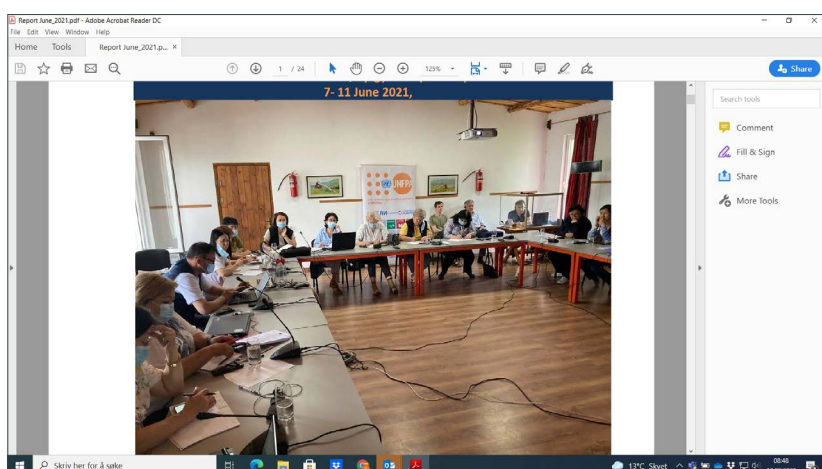
Screenshot from one of the meetings.

Virtual training session on population statistics

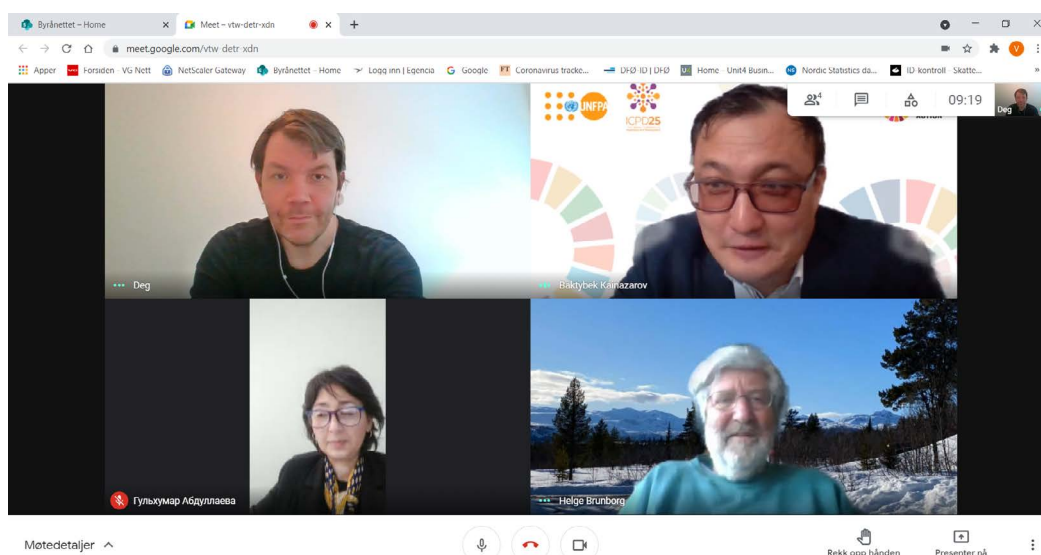
In June, Statistics Norway, together with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Kyrgyzstan, organised a training course on the use of administrative registers for production of population statistics. About 25 persons from Kyrgyzstan participated, with representatives from the National Statistical Committee (NSC), Ministry of Health and Social Development, State Registration Service, State Agency for Regional Development, and the State Tax Service.

The course was organized via Zoom where the Norwegian presentations were given by Statistics Norway, Norwegian Tax Administration (which is the owner of the Norwegian Population Register), the Directorate of Migration, and the Norwegian Mapping Authority. There were also presentations of the Kyrgyz systems by representatives of the National Statistical Committee and the Civil Registry Office.

Kyrgyzstan has made huge progress in their population registration system over the last years and cooperation between the civil register and the NSC has improved. During the seminar, the participants discussed further steps for how to strengthen the Kyrgyz' Tunduk system and the possibility of creating a population register in Kyrgyzstan, based on the experience of Norway. The importance of improving the quality of inter-departmental interaction and the exchange of data with the statistical office within the framework of a transition to e-government was highlighted.



The participants in Kyrgyzstan followed the presentations via Zoom.



The workshop was moderated by Ms Gul'khumar Abdullaeva of the National Statistical Committee of Kyrgyz Republic and Mr Baktybek Kainazarov of UNFPA, with presentations from (amongst others) Dr Helge Brunborg and Mr Vebjørn Aalandslid, Statistics Norway.

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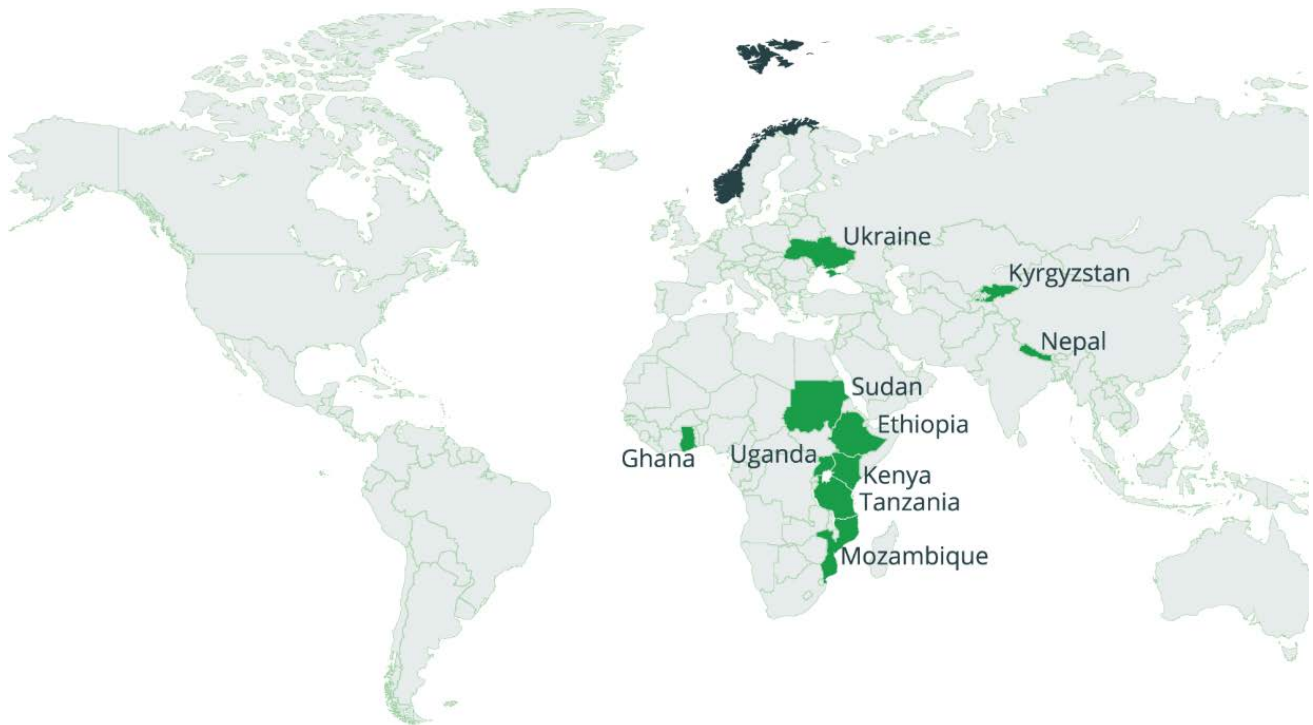
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